

Testimony of

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Before the

**House Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Economic Security, Infrastructure
Protection and Cybersecurity**

**“Improving Management of the
Aviation Screening Workforce”**

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Chairman Lungren, Ranking Member Sanchez and members of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Economic Security, Infrastructure Protection and Cybersecurity, thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing on Improving Management of the Aviation Screening Workforce. I am John L. Martin, the Director of the San Francisco International Airport, which is the largest airport participating in the Screening Partnership Program (SPP).

First of all, I wish to commend this Committee, the staff and others in the Congress for the attention you are giving to the security problems facing our aviation system. We would particularly like to thank those committee members and staff who have visited San Francisco and viewed our systems first hand and welcome any other members and staff to do the same. Your support has allowed us to deploy one of the most comprehensive and robust screening programs and multi-layered security systems of any airport in the world.

I would like to preface my comments concerning the topic of today's hearing by expressing my belief that the security of our nation's airports is critical to the commercial well being of the United States. San Francisco International Airport has a long history of initiating state of the art security systems such as biometric access control; professional standards for airport screening personnel beyond those required by the federal government and developing the first automated inline baggage screening system.

Our mission as a major airport is to ensure that we have enhanced the capabilities of our organization by working in partnership with all relevant agencies including the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Department of Homeland Security to make travel safe and secure.

Our present relationship with the TSA and, in particular, the local Federal Security Director's (FSD) staff has resulted in operations that have not only provided state of the art security, but has also delivered excellent customer service while substantially reducing the number of screeners.

The private screener workforce approach has worked well at SFO and while we have submitted an application to continue in the SPP, we can only continue conditioned upon satisfaction of four items that are essential to the potential liability exposure issues of SFO as a result of our participation. These liability

concerns are shared across the airport industry. I believe that if the liability issues are addressed, more airports may seriously consider opting-out.

Of the four conditions that we presented to the TSA in a letter on April 28, 2005, two of the conditions will require amendments to the Support Anti-Terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies (SAFETY) Act and two can be addressed by administrative changes on the part of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I can't stress enough the need for these changes in order for Airports across the country to continue to use private screeners effectively. Without these changes I believe that it is very doubtful that many airports will consider opting out of the federal screener program.

SFO's conditional SPP application, would require the following four conditions be met for implementation of a SPP at SFO:

1. Any contracted screening provider chosen by the TSA for SFO must be both Designated as a Qualified Anti-Terrorism Technology (QATT) and Certified as an approved product for Homeland Security pursuant to the Support Anti-Terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies (SAFETY) Act.
2. Liability limitations equivalent to those extended to Designated QATTs under the SAFETY Act must be extended to SFO with regard to any liability based upon screening activities and the act of opting-out or participating in the SPP so that SFO is shielded from liability exposure in excess of that of airports that choose not to opt-out.
3. TSA's contract with the screening provider must contain indemnification of the City & County of San Francisco and its Airport Commission (SFO) for the negligent acts and omissions of the screening contractor. The indemnity must apply to all claims for liability, not simply claims related to terrorist acts.
4. TSA's contract with the screening provider must additionally require the contractor to name the City and Commission (SFO) as additional named insureds on the screening providers required liability insurance policies.

San Francisco asked to be a participant in the pilot screening program, prior to the federalization of the nation's airport screeners under the TSA, because we had serious concerns about a new federal agency's ability to support the difficult and challenging process of recruiting, hiring and managing one of the largest and most

important workforces at our airport. Significant staff shortfalls over a long period of time with other federal agencies at SFO had been commonplace in the past.

I believe that our private screening company, Covenant Aviation Security, is doing an excellent job. They work cooperatively as a team player with the Airport and the TSA and have successfully deployed creative hiring and training programs, which have minimized employee turnover and lost time due to injuries and illnesses. Further, I believe there is a higher level of customer satisfaction. It is worth mentioning that San Francisco has the shortest average passenger screening time of any major airport in the United States.

The collaboration between Airport management, the Federal Security Director (FSD) management staff and the contractor has allowed us to coordinate and deploy state of the art screening systems, which combined with a well trained workforce, provide an extremely high level of security and customer service. This combination of collaborative effort, best practices and the application of technology has resulted in a net reduction of more than 400 screeners since the TSA took over in 2002.

Overall, the SPP process has allowed SFO's FSD to spend his time on security issues, instead of managing the human resources function of over 1200 screeners. The Airport management has enhanced the screening system by adding sufficient checkpoint capacity to ensure adequate passenger processing capability.

The use of contractors under the SPP has helped to identify best practice solutions to security challenges. This being said, SFO, and other airports using private screeners, can only continue in the SPP if our liability exposure can be addressed. We have successfully dealt with this issue on contracts at the Airport that involve the FAA. These contractors are required to both indemnify the FAA and list the FAA as an additional insured. We have expressed these concerns to the TSA and look forward to correcting the exposure issues so that we can continue in this effective screening program.

Airports, despite being public agencies, operate as businesses. Security is too large a part of the operational base of our nation's aviation system to ignore best business practices. Flexibility and creative decision-making make it possible to have an efficient, cost effective and robust layer of security systems and should be encouraged regardless of whether the screeners are federal or contract employees.

Some examples of “Team SFO” initiatives that have resulted in higher efficiency include:

The development of a “Screener Control Center” (SCC) that, in conjunction with the comprehensive deployment of closed circuit television (CCTV) is able to simultaneously monitor the operation of SFO’s 39 passenger checkpoint lanes and the queuing of passengers at checkpoints from a central location. The SCC has substantially increased the screening contractor’s ability to adjust staff levels to support passenger volume changes at the checkpoints. The SCC has also reduced the potential for a passenger breeching the checkpoint. This system was installed by the Airport and paid for by the contractor.

The FSD’s management staff has very effectively coordinated with the contractor to ensure the lowest level of staff attrition and the highest level of security and customer service performance by instituting a weekly detailed performance review with the contractor. This review consists of a comprehensive review of critical performance metrics including; passenger wait times per checkpoint; screener test results; training conducted; customer complaints; screener attrition; screening absenteeism and overtime vs. overtime goal review to name a few. The performance review has resulted in extremely effective operations. I believe this type of review illustrates one of the primary benefits of the SSP.

The Airport management has enhanced the screening system by adding sufficient checkpoint capacity to ensure adequate passenger processing capability. We have also aggressively and proactively deployed an automated baggage inspection system capable of screening over 53,000 bags per day using 45 CTX 9000s. These devices are multiplexed to a remote screening facility that allows for better oversight and supervision of “on screen resolution” (OSR) functions while significantly reducing the number of screeners needed to operate the system. SFO, could in fact, provide OSR for other cities using its existing facilities further reducing TSA costs.

All that being said, as previously noted, SFO can only continue in the Airport Screening Privatization Program if its liability concerns can be solved by Congressional action and TSA cooperation. First, Congress must amend the Safety Act to extend to SFO the liability limitations extended to QATTs under the Act. Second, TSA, at SFO, must contract with a screening provider that is both “designated” and “certified” under the Safety Act. And third, TSA’s contract with the screening provider must contain a requirement both that SFO be indemnified for the negligence of the screening provider and that SFO be named as an additional insured in the screening provider’s liability insurance policies.